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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 002231

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SUBJECT: IRAN FM MOTTAKI: COOPERATION ON AFGHANISTAN AND
IRAQ POSSIBLE, DPRK MILITARY COOPERATION "UNNECESSARY"

Classified By: A/POL Brian McFeeters. Reasons 1.4(b/d)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: In meetings on November 13 in Seoul with ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan and Prime Minister Han Seung-soo, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki suggested that cooperation with the U.S. on Afghanistan and Iraq might be possible, but would depend on whether the U.S. was "sincere" about withdrawing troops from Iraq. During a November 17 readout on the meetings, the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) Middle East Division told poloff that FM Mottaki had said Iran's "self-sufficiency" rendered military cooperation with North Korea unnecessary. Iran was "ready for any compromise" on issues other than enrichment capability, which Mottaki called a "red line" and insisted was essential to fuel 20 planned nuclear reactors. Tehran remains unhappy the ROKG has warned Korean industries of the risks of dealing with Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRISL). FM Yu told Mottaki that it was important for Iran to gain the confidence of the international community and expressed a desire to see the nuclear issue resolved. FM Mottaki's visit to Seoul followed one to Pyongyang November 12. End summary.

Iran Hopes for "Open Opportunity" With New Administration

¶12. (C) MOFAT Middle East Division Second Secretary Lee Sung-hwan on November 17 provided poloff with a read-out of Iran Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki's November 13 meetings in Seoul with ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan and Prime Minister Han Seung-soo. FM Mottaki, Lee said, expressed interest in the implications of the dawning of a new U.S. administration for the Korean peninsula. President Ahmadinejad hoped for an "open opportunity" once President-elect Obama took office, FM Mottaki continued, but emphasized that Iran's cooperation would hinge on whether the administration made "sincere efforts to resolve problems the U.S. itself has created." Among the most important factors affecting U.S. standing in the Middle East in the coming months would be 1) whether President-elect Obama would withdraw troops from Iraq within 16 months, and 2) whether a timeline for this withdrawal would be reflected in a security pact with Iraq.

¶13. (C) FM Mottaki also suggested that it might be possible for Iran to cooperate with the U.S. on Afghanistan and Iraq. There were two tracks to U.S.-Iran relations, he said: normalization of ties and resolution of outstanding issues such those involving Afghanistan and Iraq. On normalization, there was still much ground to cover, but there was more possibility on the outstanding issues front. FM Mottaki said Iran had received messages from the U.S. about matters

pertaining to Iraq and Afghanistan. FM Yu said he welcomed and encouraged Iran's cooperation with the U.S.

Military Cooperation with DPRK "Unnecessary"

¶ 14. (C) FM Yu informed FM Mottaki, who had visited Pyongyang the previous day, November 12, that "any military cooperation between Iran and North Korea would be detrimental to South Korea's national security" and asked him if such cooperation existed. Admitting that they had cooperated in the 1980's, FM Mottaki responded evasively that Iran's "self-sufficiency" now rendered military cooperation with the DPRK unnecessary. He cited a "series of missile launches" as evidence of this self-sufficiency.

¶ 15. (C) FM Mottaki said he came away from his meetings in Pyongyang with the impression that the DPRK was very negatively disposed toward Seoul and was acting as if "some problem" would arise "from outside." He noted that the approach of previous ROK administrations had "generated more optimism." FM Mottaki did not indicate who his Pyongyang interlocutors were, but the Tehran Times reported that he met with Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) Chairman Choe Thae-bok, SPA Presidium President Kim Yong-nam, Foreign Minister Park Ui-chun, and Foreign Trade Minister Li Kwang-gun.

Uranium Enrichment a "Red Line"

¶ 16. (C) Insisting that Iran was not pursuing nuclear weapons, FM Mottaki stressed that uranium enrichment capability was nevertheless needed to fuel 20 planned nuclear reactors. Tehran would continue to work with the IAEA and P5 1 and was "ready for any compromise" on other issues, but enrichment capability was a "red line." FM Yu responded that it was important that Iran gain international confidence in its activities and expressed a desire to see the nuclear issue resolved.

Still Upset About IRISL

¶ 17. (C) During his meeting with FM Yu, and then again more strongly in his meeting with PM Han, FM Mottaki voiced displeasure about ROKG measures taken regarding Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRISL). (Note: MOFAT had requested the ROK Ministry of Transportation to inform Korean industries of the risks of dealing with IRISL. Tehran had learned of this once IRISL's ROK subsidiary Sisco learned of the MOT notice. End Note.) The Iranians had protested the ROKG's actions before, notably during an earlier visit to Seoul by the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs.

¶ 18. (C) On ROK-Iran bilateral relations, FM Mottaki and FM Yu discussed cultural and business exchanges and the need for more consultations between the two countries' Foreign Ministries. Noting President Ahmadinejad's message of congratulations to President-elect Obama, FM Yu expressed hope for better U.S.-Iran relations and indicated that growth in ROK-Iran economic exchanges would be predicated on improved U.S.-Iran ties. FM Mottaki commented that he thought bilateral relations should not be affected by third parties.

FM Mottaki's Asia Schedule

¶ 19. (C) Middle East Division Second Secretary Lee said FM Mottaki's visit came on short notice and was something of a surprise to the ROKG. The courtesy call on PM Han was added to his schedule at the request of the Iranians. FM Mottaki was originally scheduled to travel from Kuala Lumpur to Seoul

and then Pyongyang, but went to Pyongyang before Seoul instead, arriving in Seoul November 13 and departing the next morning.
STEPHENS